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From: Presidency  
To: Council (EPSCO)  
Subject: Managing stress and psychosocial risks at work

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Delegations will find attached the Presidency note on the above subject, with a view to the lunch discussion at the EPSCO Council on 19 June.

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## Managing stress and psychosocial risks at work

Health and safety at work constitute an important priority at European Union level as well as at national level. They are related to the fundamental and primary rights of workers to safe and decent working conditions. In the Union, even though important progress can be observed, the costs of work-related accidents and occupational diseases remain enormous. Furthermore, new and emerging risks pose a series of new challenges and problems that must be faced promptly and effectively. According to a recent Eurobarometer survey, workers consider stress to be one of the main occupational risks (53%).

On the 6 June 2014 the Commission published a Communication on an **EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014 - 2020**. It contains a framework for action, cooperation and exchange of good practices in the field of occupational health and safety for the coming period until 2020. It can be implemented only with the active participation of the national authorities and the social partners.

The new Strategy for 2014-2020 notes that changes in work organisation brought about by developments in the area of information technology, in particular those that allow for constant connectivity, open up enormous possibilities for flexible and interactive work processes. There is also increasing workforce diversity, as reflected in new atypical contractual arrangements and work patterns, and a higher job turnover associated with shorter job assignments. The Communication concludes that specific attention should be given to addressing the impact of changes in work organisation.

The 2014-2020 Framework identifies seven key strategic objectives, among them:

- review and further consolidate national OSH strategies;
- facilitate compliance with OSH legislation, particularly by micro and small enterprises;
- address the ageing of the workforce, emerging new risks, prevention of work-related and occupational diseases.

The 2-year campaign (2014-2015) of the **European Agency for Safety and Health at Work** (EU-OSHA) is dedicated to managing stress and psychosocial risks. The main goal of the campaign is to demonstrate the dimensions, the different aspects and the good practices in order to manage stress and psychosocial risks through the dissemination of information and targeted actions performed by the EU-OSHA.

As mentioned in the campaign guide:

“The effective management of health and safety in the workplace is good for workers, good for business and good for society as a whole. It is especially important that we remember this in times of economic uncertainty. It is essential that businesses maintain productivity, and when working under pressure to meet deadlines, when mistakes are most likely to be made and accidents most likely to occur. It might be tempting to dismiss occupational safety and health (OSH) in the pressurised modern workplace as an ‘administrative burden’ that merely fulfils legal obligations. However, that would be counterproductive. It is more important than ever to be aware of and manage risks in the workplace”.

The main goal of the campaign of the EU-OSHA is to help employers, employees and their representatives to identify and manage psychosocial risks in the workplace. That is because the effective confrontation of psychosocial risks helps to create a healthy working environment and the positive effects extend from the worker's personal level to the overall business performance.

Ministers are invited to consider the following questions in their interventions:

- ***How can the Member States, with the support of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, help all employers and employees, but in particular small and micro enterprises, to identify and better manage their psychosocial risks in the workplace? What kind of innovative tools they could be offered for this?***
- ***In what ways could the social partners be better involved in the identification and management of psychosocial risks in the workplace?***